Raising Awareness in an Effort to Reduce Food Waste

Our project is attempting reduce food waste by raising awareness of the benefits of conscious food practices and implementing a program that will allow donations of unused food.

Tag words: food, waste, awareness, donation, wasting, hunger, starvation

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Summary

The issue of food waste is a growing concern throughout America. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Loss Project, Americans throw away more than 25 percent — some 25.9 million tons — of all the food we produce for domestic sale and consumption. We contacted Rutgers catering service in an effort to donate unused food to a local food rescue mission, such as Table To Table, after one of their events. To increase awareness we also made and handed out pamphlets all throughout Rutgers including restaurants on Easton Avenue. Being proactive doesn’t require much effort or time and raising awareness is great first step in reducing the amount of food waste.

Video Link

Raising Awareness in an Effort to Reduce Food Waste: http://youtu.be/TDRkJHfueR0
The Issue: Food Waste

Food Wasted in America (Neil Patel)
The issue of food waste in America has been becoming increasingly worse in recent years. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that Americans waste 30 percent of all edible food produced, bought, and sold in this country, although it acknowledges that this figure is probably low. Recently, two separate groups of scientists, one at the University of Arizona and another at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), published estimates of 40 percent or more. The NIH researchers say Americans, on average, waste 1,400 calories a day per person, or about two full meals each and every day.

It is estimated that 13 percent of all municipal solid waste consists of food scraps and edible thrown out food items from residences and food-service establishments such as restaurants, cafeterias, etc. This turns out to be about 30 million tons a year, or enough food to feed all of Canada during that same period. When all that food decomposes in landfills, one by-product is methane, which has 20 times the global-warming potency of carbon dioxide. Based on Environmental Protection Agency data, rotting food may be responsible for about one-tenth of all natural methane emissions.

Part of the problem is the diverse nature of food waste. There is no single source to blame for all of the food waste in the country, but there are many different sources that make a big impression on the economy and the environment. Supermarkets discard malformed, physically inferior, food items, which are perfectly edible because they don't look perfect to picky shoppers. Back on the farm, approximately 7 percent of crops are not harvested each year because of extreme weather events, pest infestations, or, more commonly, economic factors that diminish producers' willingness to bring their products to market.

But the biggest players in the food industry such as farms, processors, and supermarket chains are not the largest contributors to food waste. Compared with what we toss out at restaurants and in our own homes, the nation's supermarkets actually barely make an impact. According to USDA statistics, in 1995, roughly 5.4 billion pounds of food were lost at the retail level, while 91 billion pounds were lost in America's kitchens, restaurants, and institutional cafeterias (Green Living Tips). In other words, food-service and consumer loss make up 95 percent of all food waste, which means most of the responsibility falls on those who prepare the food we eat, whether it's a homemade meal, a dinner at a sit-down restaurant, or the quick breakfast you eat on the way to work or school in the morning.
In the United States, the definition of food security refers to the ability to access enough nutritionally adequate and safe food in socially acceptable ways for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity occurs when these foods are not available to a person, or the individual’s method to obtain acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way is uncertain or hindered. Families can be food insecure without hunger, in which case the evidence of food shows lowered nutritional value and/or insufficient calories or insufficient variety of foods. To be food insecure with moderate hunger is defined as when the adults in the household having reported being hungry multiple times, but the children in the household have enough to eat. Finally, those in severe hunger have hungry children and reduced food intake for all members of the family. Food insecurity seems to be more of a problem in the United States rather than hunger. However, that does not change the fact that there is a significant amount of people in the United States who are not getting adequate nutrition despite the enormous amount of food produced and wasted. Since 1995, the Census Bureau has conducted a survey every year containing 18 items concerning food security. In 2005, the population of the United States that was food insecure was 35 million. In 2009, 14% of all households were food insecure during some point in the year. 7.1 percent were low food secure, and 3.9 percent had very low food security. The highest rate of food insecurity since 1995 was in 2008 at a rate of 14.6% of households. There are many food assistance programs available for those in need, but unfortunately not everyone who may be food insecure can qualify for these programs. The programs available are also need of revision and improvement. For example, many people who are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition ...
Assistance Program (SNAP) do not receive assistance. Only 4 in 10 low income children who obtain free lunch also get free breakfast, and only 2 in 10 get food in the summer once school has ended. Programs like SNAP and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are beneficial, but they simply do not do enough.

Poverty is one of the most significant factors contributing to food insecurity and hunger. In 2005, households with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty line were five times more likely to be food insecure. Low-income households with children are more likely to be food insecure than those without children. The 2005 federal standard for poverty is defined as $19,350 a year for a family of four. Many people have to cut back on food spending, because in comparison to rent or the electric bill, food is something people can cut costs on.

Food Safety and Sanitation (Hilary Smith)
Some food banks and soup kitchens accept perishable foods; others do not. Food banks are particularly cautious about receiving and giving foods that need to be “Temperature Controlled For Safety” (TCS) due to the National Restaurant Association’s guidelines. Everyone has knowledge of basic food safety just from practices at home. Everyone knows that hot foods should stay hot, and cold foods should stay cold. No perishable foods that require being hot or cold should stay in the temperature danger zone of 41-140 degrees Fahrenheit for more than two hours. Food left out longer than the limit of two hours in this temperature range runs the risk of developing harmful microbial growth that can make humans ill. Restaurants take this information very seriously, and do not like to pose risks even to people who are in need of food.

Temperature control is the main concern in performing food rescue. However, there are two legislative acts that, in New Jersey, protect those who generously donate from getting into legal trouble if a recipient does end up sick from the donated food. The Good Samaritan Act of the State of New Jersey and the national Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act are those two acts.

On October 1, 1996, the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act was signed to encourage the donation of food and grocery products to non-profit organizations to give to those in need of food assistance. The act protects donors from liability when they donate to an organization. It protects the good citizen from civil and criminal liability if the product that was donated causes harm later on to the recipient. The act reads:

An Act (Hilary Smith)
To encourage the donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations for distribution to needy individuals by giving the Model Good Samaritan Food Donation Act the full force and effect of law.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Section 1. CONVERSION TO PERMANENT LAW OD MODEL GOOD SAMARITAN FOOD DONATION ACT AND TRANSFER OF THAT ACT TO CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966.
(a) Conversion to Permanent Law. -- Title IV of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended --

by striking the title heading and sections 401 and 403 (42 U.S.C. 12671 and 12673); and

in section 402 (42 U.S.C. 12672) --

(A) in the section heading, by striking "model" and inserting "bill emerson"

(B) in subsection (a), by striking "Good Samaritan" and inserting "Bill Emerson Good Samaritan;"

(C) in subsection (b)(7), to read as follows:

"(7) GROSS NEGLIGENCE. -- The term 'gross negligence' means voluntary and conscious conduct (including a failure to act) by a person who, at the time of the conduct, knew that the conduct was likely to be harmful to the health or well-being of another person."

(D) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following:

"(c) LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES FROM DONATED FOOD AND GROCERY PRODUCTS.

"(1) LIABILITY OF PERSON OR GLEANER. -- A person or gleaner shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the person or gleaner donates in good faith to a nonprofit organization for ultimate distribution to needy individuals.

"(2) LIABILITY OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION. -- A nonprofit organization shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the nonprofit organization received as a donation in good faith from a person or gleaner for ultimate distribution to needy individuals.

"(3) EXCEPTION. -- Paragraphs (1) and (2) shall not apply to an injury to or death of an ultimate user recipient of the food or grocery product that results from an act or omission of the person, gleaner or nonprofit organization, as applicable, constituting gross negligence or intentional misconduct."

(E) in subsection (f), by adding at the end the following: "Nothing in this section shall be construed to supersede State or local health regulations."

(b) TRANSFER TO CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966. -- Section 402 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12762) (as amended by subsection (a)) --

is transferred from the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to the Child Nutrition Act of 1966;
is redesignated as section 22 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966; and

is added at the end of such Act.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT. -- The table of contents for the National and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended by striking the items relating to title IV.

References

http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:ZC6h3_UTWDUJ:www.ode.state.or.us/services/nutrition/nslp/2011/good_samaritan_act.pdf+the+good+samaritan+act+food&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESjTpfgPXNJdquozbjgBYb-vtRbK03Gk3D5UzLYmXXIc-LAZ9UE4plaMwCkwwWT9xtmBM2mRflVfud_jatMt-6P45u2ynzZcmQxI5fZ2INMLrFOeW-3Y997U5q6Y1i5n0NK_DxT05&sig=AHIEtbSXQir042P4LkfbhCPmhxSL8XBF9g


Organizations (Birju Patel)
Table To Table is a community based food rescue program. They collect food that is perishable and prepared for events such as catering and delivers it to organizations around the Bergen, Hudson, Essex, and Passaic counties. All this fresh food is sent to various agencies throughout the area such as elder care facilities, drug rehab centers, homeless shelters, homes for victims of domestic violence, HIV centers, and pantries serving the “working poor” (Table To Table). Table To Table is the only food rescue program in Northeast New Jersey dedicated to redistributing prepared and perishable foods.

Table To Table typically receives food donations that would have otherwise been thrown away and gone to waste. With the use of refrigerated trucks, Table To Table is able to pick-up and bring food that is no longer able to be sold or that would be discarded. Fresh food that is donated the day of to Table To Table is donated to one of the facilities that will use it that day. 45% of the food that is donated to Table To Table is fresh produce that would otherwise not be allowed to be sold due to expiration dates. The next largest majority of food being donated is meat and bread and baked goods both 20%. Perishable and prepared
foods are 11%, other 3%, and dairy 1%.

City Harvest is another food rescue program that is dedicated to feeding New York City’s hungry men, women, and children (City Harvest). It is the world’s first food rescue organization. It was started by a group of ordinary citizens, who did not understand why restaurants were discarding food with hundreds of hungry people in need. City Harvest has donated over 300 million pounds of food to about 600 community food programs in New York City. Now City Harvest donates nearly 77,000 pounds of food daily and 28 million pounds of food a year. To minimize the cost to them, City Harvest picks up and delivers the food the same day. The cost to deliver a pound of food is only 23 cents for City Harvest.

A financial report from City Harvest can be seen above. They receive $33,771,375 worth of food donations. This is from public support of the general population. $2,103,442 is donated from corporations, $3,980,370 from foundations, and $6,365,980 from individuals. This comes to a total public support of $48,133,774 per year (City Harvest Annual Report).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</th>
<th>UNRESTRICTED</th>
<th>TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED</th>
<th>YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2009 TOTAL NET ASSETS</th>
<th>2008 TOTAL NET ASSETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donated food</td>
<td>$33,771,375</td>
<td></td>
<td>$26,879,264</td>
<td>$26,879,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporations</td>
<td>2,103,442</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,103,442</td>
<td>1,773,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>6,365,980</td>
<td>265,000</td>
<td>6,630,980</td>
<td>6,218,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organizations</td>
<td>263,758</td>
<td></td>
<td>263,758</td>
<td>218,681</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special events</td>
<td>1,648,849</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,648,849</td>
<td>1,892,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total public support</td>
<td>$48,133,774</td>
<td>$623,487</td>
<td>$48,757,261</td>
<td>$41,282,063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Community Food Bank of New Jersey fights hunger by distributing food and groceries, providing education and training, and making new programs to help low income families and people meet their essential needs (N.J. Food Bank). Food that is donated to The Community Food Bank of New Jersey goes to various locations such as emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and on-site residential programs, senior feedings programs, child care centers, after school programs, group homes, and summer camps. Every year The Community Food Bank of New Jersey assists over 1600 agencies and are able to distribute over 35 million pounds of food in New Jersey. They have served up to 750,000 people and 400 millions pounds of food and groceries with a value of nearly 1 billion dollars (N.J. Food Bank Distribution).

Feeding America are food banks across the United States that focus on providing low income families and individuals the food and supplies needed to live a normal life. They are the nations leading hunger relief program providing food to over 37 million Americans a year, 14 million children, and 3 million seniors. Feeding America gets donations from food and grocery industries, government agencies, individuals and other organizations. They then move the donated food to other member food banks in areas that need the food the most. The member food banks are then responsible for the food, ensuring proper storage and distribution of the products.
The donations are provided for the people in need at soup kitchens, youth programs, senior homes, etc. Roles of local and nation food banks can be seen below in the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Securing Food</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Role:</strong> Secure food from local manufacturers, retailers, farmers and government sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>National Role:</strong> Secure food from large corporate manufacturers and retailers through nationwide initiatives and facilitate the acquisition of government-supplied food.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Raising Funds</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Role:</strong> Acquire funding from local corporate, foundation and individual donors, and utilize those funds efficiently to maximize service to people in need.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>National Role:</strong> Acquire funding from corporate, foundation and individual donors, and provide those funds as seed money to spur local innovation.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Distributing Food</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Role:</strong> Distribute food received from Feeding America and local sources to people in need, via a local system of agencies.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>National Role:</strong> Through a robust logistics system, distribute food donations received nationally to the food banks that need them the most.</td>
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<th>Sharing Best Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Role:</strong> Share wisdom with other network members and uphold the highest standards for food safety, fiscal responsibility and efficiency.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>National Role:</strong> Inspire members to implement proven programs and uphold the highest standards for food safety, fiscal responsibility and efficiency.</td>
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<th>Advocating and Inspiring</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Role:</strong> Create a local movement and a sense of compassionate urgency, encouraging better government programs and inspiring individuals to take action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Role:</strong> Create a national movement and a sense of compassionate urgency, encouraging better government programs and inspiring individuals to take action.</td>
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The Service Project: Food Collection

Our group took a great interest in the food rescue topic. We were all enthusiastic about helping people who need food. Some individuals have no trouble tossing it away. That idea of throwing it out after large events really caught our eye. As soon as everyone has eaten or left an event at Rutgers, the food is immediately discarded. This is when we decided to try and work with the catering department here at the University.

The initial thought and beginning of the process went well. We were able to come up with a solid plan. We were going to contact an organization to collect the food after a catered event on campus. An attempt to work with Elijah’s promise, located in New Brunswick, was initially made. Their donation department was very interested until they learned of the donation, being perishable food. They explained to our group that they only serve food to the needy, that is made in their on site kitchen. The place does this because they are afraid of possible illnesses that could come in along with the food. This derailed our original plan until they suggested contacting an organization called Ozanam.

Ozanam is a group run by Catholic Charities, it is a men’s shelter in New Brunswick. We established a good relationship with the organization. They listened to our proposal and agreed that taking non-perishable food items was not a problem. The group accepts food that they deem healthy to eat. The only problem with this charity is that they do not have any means to come and pick up the food (i.e. a refrigerated van). This created a problem because we would not be able to provide one personally after every Rutgers event.

We then began to do some research and speak with our professor, who suggested we look at and contact City Harvest and Table to Table. Both these organizations are very well known and run in New York City and in northeast New Jersey, respectively. The Table to Table organization seemed like a great option in which we promptly contacted. We spoke with a woman who worked in the donations department and she explained how they run their charity. What we learned right away via the internet was, they have vans and volunteers, who everyday travel around and pick up donations. They told us to call them back when we got more information from Rutgers, to set it all up. This became the problem, contacting Rutgers.

References

City Harvest Annual Report
Table To Table
City Harvest
http://www.cityharvest.org/about/
N.J. Food Bank
http://www.njfoodbank.org/programs/
N.J. Food Bank Distribution
http://www.njfoodbank.org/programs/food-distribution/
As students at Rutgers University, we see and understand what is going on around us. We are a state and federal funded school, which means rules and regulations are followed strictly. The person we attempted to speak with was Kevin Lyons. He is the Chief Procurement Officer at the University. He is well renowned in the field. “Lyons is one of many at Rutgers committed to making the university a leader in “green” initiatives – environmentally sound policies beneficial to the university community, New Jersey, the nation and the world.” (Focus) We emailed him concerning our efforts, asking for his assistance. We figured between our experience and studies in the nutrition fields, and his expertise in recycling, we could do something great. Mr. Lyons did not answer any of our group members emails. We called his phone line listed online and left messages, no response. We tried to locate him in his workplace, no such luck. We were left wondering what would become of our project.

Our group met up and spoke about creating awareness of food rescue. We did research and made pamphlets stating great facts and making people aware of food rescue. The informative pamphlet was handed out to students around campus. We also spoke with a few students more in depth about the food rescue process. The pamphlet has a section on the back that states “What you can do,” below it lists the number of the catering and dining services department, and Mr. Lyons email is also listed. We hope the strength in numbers approach will show him how many kids want to help out and care.

The service project was a great success in the fact that we spread the word and the true meaning of food rescue. We got a great response from those people whom we talked with. We also have an established connection with the Table to Table organization if anything were to arise in the future. Our group hopes that soon Mr. Lyons will contact our group, even if it’s after the conclusion of this semester.

References:
http://news.rutgers.edu/focus/issue.2007-02-07.7350833104/article.2007-02-07.7045732563
It has come to my attention that many organizations, restaurants and stores are throwing their food at the end of the day. Possible donations could be made too many major organizations, which transport their leftover food after events to a local charity instead of discarding it after an event. City Harvest in NYC and Table To Table are two organizations that should be emphasized more! Both are run in cities and help collect food that is “no longer acceptable” for these five-star restaurants, yet perfectly suitable for average.
We constantly reference big time restaurants and boast that people are spending a hundred dollars or so, on a single meal. Money of this quantity could feed a person for approximately, a month! Our society has put on emphasis on extravagance in all the wrong places. Food is a necessity, not a status quo.

Birju Patel
Editorial to NJ.com

With 35.9 million people in America living below the poverty line why would we ever waste our excess food?

This is a question many people do not stop and ask themselves when throwing away their leftover food or when they forget to use the bread that has just expired. With so many people living day to day not knowing if they will have a proper meal it’s about time we stop and ask ourselves this question.

With the average United States household wasting 100 billion, that’s right billion, pounds of food each year there should be no reason for this many people to have to fight for food. The average household also waste 14 percent of their food purchases, 15 percent of which is products still within their expiration date never opened.

If we became more conscious of the amount of food being wasted and thrown away, we could greatly diminish the amount of people starving for food. A task as simple as donating expiring food to your local food bank or sending leftovers from banquets and catered events to a homeless shelter could ease the pain of those in need.

There are numerous places in New Jersey willing to take on any leftover food, some companies even offer to come and pick up the food themselves. Among these companies includes Elijah’s Promise, The Food Bank of New Jersey, and even student led organizations such as Rutgers Against Hunger. The Food Bank will take donations ranging from canned goods to breads and frozen meals. Elijah’s Promise is willing to arrange pick up for foods left over from catered events that they will then serve in their kitchen to those in need.

The resources are all available; it is just a matter of how we use the resources around us. We need to make an effort to not waste our food and instead of simply tossing our leftovers away, taking the time out to put them to better use.

3.5 percent of American households experience hunger; with our help we can reduce this number.

Hilary Smith
Editorial
Dear Editor,

The problem of food waste in the U.S. is ridiculous. Forty percent of all food in the United States is thrown out! I don’t understand how it’s okay for a restaurant to prepare gigantic amounts of food and throw it out at the end of the day. Just like there are laws against littering, there should be laws against wasting food. The amount of perfectly good food that is thrown out at the end of the day each day could probably feed a small country. There are so many hungry people in the world and all this perfectly good food that they are not being fed. Something needs to be done about this problem. A strategy needs to be made in order to transport this food to the people who could use it. As a country I do not understand how we can’t logically work together to take action on this issue. It may seem like something small but not to someone who is hungry.

Sincerely,

Angry Food Rescuer

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Neil Patel
Editorial to the North Brunswick Sentinel

Wasting food has become a major issue in America. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that Americans waste 30 percent of all edible food produced, bought, and sold in this country, although it acknowledges that this figure is probably low. Recently, two separate groups of scientists, one at the University of Arizona and another at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), published estimates of 40 percent or more. Add up all the losses that occur throughout the food chain, the NIH researchers say, and Americans, on average, waste 1,400 calories a day per person, or about two full meals. This is an incredible amount of food considering the millions of people a year that do not have a steady income to provide enough food for themselves and their families.

Numerous steps can be taken to reduce the overall waste of food in our country, but without individual effort, it is nearly impossible. People should be aware of the amount of food they purchase whether it is ready-made in a restaurant, or produce in a supermarket. Cutting down not only helps prevent overall waste but also benefits you economically. Food donations are a major part of helping reduce food waste in America. Restaurants, supermarkets, and other food retailers can help tremendously by being aware of the amount of food they throw away. Knowing when produce and other food will expire, and/or not comply with aesthetic standards and donating it is a great way to start. Shelters all over the country are always in need of food.

Being proactive doesn’t require too much effort or time. Being aware of things that can lead to food waste can lead to actively reducing the amount of waste you produce each and every day. By wasting pounds upon pounds of food benefits no one, especially those who aren’t sure of when their next meal will be. Donate any unused food to your local shelter and start making a difference as soon as possible.